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GLOS3550V

1 May 2018

El joto y la mestiza: Bridging a Divide in Chicano Tribe

Introduction

Thus far, the experiences of Chicano gay men have been sparsely discussed in comparison to those of Chicana lesbians in both academia and activism. I began noticing that there was a certain divide between Chicano gay men and Chicana lesbians while reading Gloria Anzaldúa's emblematic work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, in which she writes that "Lumping the males who deviate from the general norm with the man, the oppressor, is a gross injustice" (Anzaldúa 106). She goes on to say that she and other queer Chicanas have remained in the dark pit where the world keeps lesbians, and that as feminists and lesbians, they have closed off their hearts to men, including their queer brethren, disinherited and marginalized as they are (Anzaldúa 106). Not only did I notice the existence of this divide, but Anzaldúa helped me realize the power of queerness and of queer people of all stripes uniting together. She describes homosexuals as "Being the supreme crossers of cultures, […] [having] strong bonds with the queer [of many races] and with the queer in […] the rest of the planet. [Coming] from all colors, all classes, all races, all time periods" (Anzaldúa 106). She calls on Chicanos to acknowledge the contributions of these supreme crossers of cultures, "to listen to [their] *jotería* [Chicano term for queer folks]," who have been "at the forefront […] of all liberation struggles in this country" (Anzaldúa 107). Other queer Chicana academics and writers such as Cherríe Moraga have also commented on the scarcity of engagement and cultural production coming

from Chicano gay men and the potential to bridge the divide described by Anzaldúa. Exploring differences and commonalities between the experiences of Chicano gay men and lesbians and their respective positionalities in the Chicano social-cultural hierarchy can elucidate the unique roles these men could play in a future coalition-building process and activism.

Queer Chicanos have a unique experience in which they must navigate their queerness not only in the Anglo-American society in which they live, but also within the sociocultural context of their Mexican-American family. For this reason, it will be important to elucidate the myriad cultural differences between the United States and Mexico that come together to affect these queer folks simultaneously. Beyond coming out of the closet and sharing their experiences, Chicana women have already done a lot of work regarding how biculturalism affects their intersection of identities, as well as the development of their own *lengua y sitio* (language and space), and the impact of movement and borders. Chicana lesbians in particular have contributed much in the way of activism and literature surrounding their queerness in both Chicano-Latino Studies as a discipline and in the Chicano Movement. On the other hand, there is relatively little coming from Chicano gay men. These men—especially traditionally masculine (i.e. straight-passing) Chicano gay men and *activos* (penetrative partners in a homosexual encounter)—represent a unique opportunity for queer Chicanos and Chicana women due to their location in the Chicano social-cultural hierarchy. Despite a lack of quantity, there are a few studies that have been conducted specifically about Chicano gay men, as well as the abundant contributions of Chicana lesbian academics, activists, and writers that provide some insight as to how these men could contribute to any future coalition-building and activism.

Methodology

Prior to delving into relevant theoretical work and the subsequent findings, it is important to address my own positionality with regard to this research. I have an outsider's perspective on the Chicano experience. My interest in the subject matter stems at least in part from an interest in exploring my own identity. I grew up understanding that I had a Puerto Rican last name and Puerto Rican heritage, and that most people saw my whiteness, English monolingualism, and lack of knowledge about and experience of the Puerto Rican culture as incongruent with any of the myriad standard manifestations of Puerto Rican-ness. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I grew increasingly interested in understanding and reconnecting with this aspect of my identity. It was this inner desire that led me to specialize in Global Studies focusing on Cultural Analysis in Latin America and Spanish-Portuguese Studies as an undergraduate student. Coming out of the closet prior to college and the subsequent yearning to better understand myself and other queer narratives led me to focus more specifically on gender and sexuality. Thus, the prospect of studying queer experiences in a Latin American context piqued my interest. In short, although I am a gay man who has in adulthood grown to care a great deal about my Puerto Rican heritage and Spanish-English bilingualism, my experience is that of a white, Western male who was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I do not share in the experiences of racism and xenophobia, a connection to indigeneity broadly, biculturalism, or inhabiting U.S.-Mexico borderlands and navigating the border culture that developed therein.

Acknowledging my white, Western positionality with regard to this research is merely a first step in deconstructing how my own perspective may be impeding my own understanding. An explicit goal of mine for this paper is that it does not constitute a Western critique of a Mexican-Latin American sexual culture or family structure that is somehow *inherently* more macho or heterosexist. I strive to write a thoughtful analysis of existing theoretical, ethnographic,

and empirical studies in Chicano-Latino studies as a discipline. In her essay, *Speaking from the Margin: Uninvited Discourse on Sexuality and Power*, Emma Pérez addresses this particular issue by addressing her own background as a historian trained in the Western European tradition. Pérez refers to the work of Luce Irigaray, a prominent French feminist, throughout the essay and explicitly describes that she is only interested in the French school's resistance to and dismemberment of the male symbolic order for the purposes of her argument. Pérez not only questions white male ideology, but also asserts that:

> "Studies in the social sciences on the Chicana/o family that ignore nontraditional family arrangements perpetuate Anglo perceptions about our community—that is, that Latino family tradition is anchored in *machismo*. Anglo feminist accusations lead to problematic Chicana discourse within feminist constructs. (Pérez 68)

This exact premise is the reasoning behind my intentional use of as many Chicano—and Mexican where appropriate—voices as possible. *Machismo* as an oppressive patriarchal system will be discussed in various sections of the paper, particularly where it relates to performance of masculinity or femininity, but overall, I seek to amplify Chicano discussions about their own experiences and to include analyses of race, class, and gender alongside sexuality.

In the context of this particular research, language is of great importance for several reasons. As I mentioned above, I did not grow up as a Spanish-English bilingual nor in a bicultural home and achieved bilingualism and a semblance of cultural understanding in adolescence and adulthood. Many of the sources that will be cited are in Spanish, and more still in a uniquely Chicano form of expression that involves using Spanglish and various Chicano dialects. For the sake of clarity, I am a fluent speaker of Spanish and according to testing

conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages my reading proficiency is Superior. ACTFL defines a Superior-level reader as being able to:

> […] understand lengthy texts of a professional, academic or literary nature. In addition, readers […] are generally aware of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles, **but may not fully understand texts in which cultural references and assumptions are deeply embedded.**" [emphasis added] (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)

As a Superior-level reader, the only higher proficiency that could be attained would be Distinguished, a level many native speakers would struggle to achieve. Regardless, as explained in the definition itself, it can still be difficult for me to understand deeply embedded cultural references and assumptions, which is especially important with regard to this particular research. Although simply not being Chicano could make engaging with a text that employs various Chicano dialects difficult for native speakers of other dialects (whose respective cultures are Latin American but not Chicano), it is important that I acknowledge that this may have an effect on my interpretation of these texts. Additionally, the temporality of these texts could have an effect on their relevance or validity in the contemporary moment. With the exception of Tomás Almaguer's ethnographic study, published in 1995, a majority of the texts cited were published post-2010, with a few theoretical texts being published in the 90s or 2000s.

Considering the unique usage of Spanglish and Chicano dialects employed in many of the texts, I am forced to contend with whether or not to translate from Spanish to English in many cases (all translation that occurs will be my own). Initially, based on a desire to amplify Chicano voices, I strove to hearken back to the bilingual nature of past Chicana writing, deliberately leaving words untranslated unless I thought a term was crucial to understanding the argument.

The bilingual nature of past Chicana writing lent itself to the creation of a text that in a sense had a (not-yet existing) "ideal" reader, or varying degrees of ideal readership with the fully bilingual-bicultural Chicano reader having a distinct advantage. I personally appreciate this choice as a means of challenging the white male ideology of the society in which they are writing and an exemplification of the writers' intersection of identities through the use of code-switching, but upon further examination have decided that this may not be as appropriate (or practical) in a research paper, especially one written by a white male in academia.

Lastly, it is important to define terms that will be occurring repeatedly throughout this analysis. I am aware that in recent years among Chicanos, the use of the term Chicanx has become steadily more prevalent as people seek to be more gender-inclusive and deconstruct the gender binary by deconstructing the binary nature of Spanish grammar. I am electing to not use this term myself because as a non-Chicano individual, I do not feel that it is my place to not only take a stance, but also impose a neologism on potential Spanish-speaking readers who do not use this term themselves. Additionally, I believe that it would be a mistake to conflate gender with sexuality, the subject of this paper being gay men and lesbians and not gender non-conforming individuals, and as such the need for the gender inclusive 'x' is somewhat diminished and could potentially impede clarity. Note that in both my introduction and methodology sections I have used the words Chicano and Chicana for specific purposes, Chicano serving to describe the (gay) men whose experiences are being studied as well as to describe broader concepts (i.e. Chicano culture, the Chicano Movement, etc.), whereas Chicana has served to describe women. Similarly, although some do not think that "queer" should be an umbrella term, in both my own writing and the writing of the queer Chicana women being cited, "queer" will be considered re-appropriated and used as such. The term has been used as a slur against LGBTQ individuals in the past but has

since been reclaimed by some swaths of the larger LGBTQ community. I and my wider extended LGBTQ social circle have largely reclaimed this term for ourselves and use it proudly as a descriptor of our myriad sexual identities. Furthermore, usage of a term that unites queer people of different sexual identities will be both practical and symbolic in a paper about coalition-building between gay men and lesbians.

Theory

I. Movement and Borders

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (henceforth referred to simply as *Borderlands*), Gloria Anzaldúa, a Chicana lesbian academic, activist, and writer, describes the U.S.-Mexico border as "*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (Anzaldúa 25). The U.S.-Mexico borderlands *bleed* because they are a site of conflicts based on political, economic, and ethnic differences, and preexisting power relations in the world foster unequal circumstances in which life is easier for people on one side of the border than the other. Each year, American and European tourists spend their warm, summer vacations in regions of the Global South like Mexico while it is difficult or even dangerous for Mexicans and other "Global Southerners" to immigrate to wealthy Western countries—"trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot" (Anzaldúa 25). Still, there is incentive enough for migrants to attempt to cross the border. Perhaps there are economic opportunities and crossing the border is a search for employment and a better life—"For many […] the choice is to stay in Mexico and starve or move north and live"—or for a new culture in which identity is (supposedly) not formed by virtue of sameness, rather by accepting mixtures, ambiguities, and contradictions (Anzaldúa 32). This is not untrue for queer folks, whether inter or intra-country, who often experience the "necessity of looking to new horizons that allow them

to be free and avoid being victims of violence" (Careaga-Pérez 7-8). Beyond the potential meanings of borders, either as a space of possibilities or restrictions, Anzaldúa describes how the journey can be the result of a "free" individual choice—as in the situation of the American and European tourists—or something that one must do because of circumstances out of one's control—such as those of immigrants and refugees to the United States or to Europe that are often fleeing unsafe conditions in their home countries.

These unequal circumstances demonstrate how borderlands are related to power. They are a site where national governments exercise their power, where one realizes that not everyone has the freedom to travel, and that the ease or difficulty of movement is based in large part on citizenship (i.e. nation-states). In *Between Inclusion and Exclusion: On the Topology of Global Space and Borders*, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson expound upon these ideas in several ways. They demonstrate the 'necropolitical' nature of borders, citing at least 5000 deaths along the U.S.-Mexico border in the 13 years prior to 2010 and the deaths of at least 17,738 people between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and an independent assessment in 2011 (Mezzadra, Neilson 63). For many, this is likely reminiscent of current headlines about the deaths of Central American and Syrian refugees attempting to enter the United States or the European Union. One of the goals set forth by Mezzadra and Neilson is the establishment of a "theoretical framework capable of coming to terms with […] the myriad systems of differential inclusion that [one sees] taking shape in various borderscapes across the globe" (Mezzadra, Neilson 67). They point out that this is not only applicable to the U.S.-Mexico Border or "Fortress Europe," but also beyond North-South contexts (such as the *hukou* system in contemporary China, complex internal divisions within the Indian labor market, South-South migration, or Australia's 'Pacific Solution') (Mezzadra, Neilson 68). Suddenly, the study of a minority group within one set of

border-dwellers (Chicanos) takes on greater importance as one realizes information gleaned from their experiences could potentially be extrapolated to the situations of myriad border populations around the world. That is not to say that there is a singular conception of a border (culture), rather they are characterized by their distinctiveness, each one the product of a particular history. The U.S.-Mexico borderlands are just one manifestation of the development of a border (culture) and are not identical to others.

Borders have many tangible effects on the lives of border-dwellers (the population which inhabits the trans-border zones of migration and exchange). A consequence of movement across existing political borders "where two worlds merging" is often the production of "a third country—a border culture" due to the circulation not only of goods and people but of ideas and cultural influences (Anzaldúa 25). Those who live in a space where such a border culture has developed have experiences and stories distinct from those of the cultures on either side of the border. This constitutes the formation of new identities and ways of belonging that cannot be confined to the boundaries of nation-states. The concept of belonging is important for border-dwellers because "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" and being the *us* makes one safer and brings one closer to the nexus of power (Anzaldúa 25). In their article, Mezzadra and Neilson describe what they call 'an excess of inclusion over belonging,' or "the proliferation of subject positions that are neither fully included nor fully excluded from the space of citizenship and from labour markets, […] that are neither fully insiders nor fully outsiders" (Mezzadra, Neilson 62). This definition is applicable especially to migrants without legal status who are estranged from the benefits of citizenship and the right to work, or to queer migrants in cities for whom "the possibility of dignified and free life is practically impossible while being constantly subjected to ridicule and public scorn by family

members and friends, as much as strangers, unless they deny or hide their [identity]" (Careaga-Pérez 42).

For Chicanos who are born in the U.S., whether their family has lived in the Southwest for generations or it is to first-generation immigrants, the 'excess of inclusion over belonging' affects them differently. Although U.S.-born Chicanos have the benefits of legal status, "Porous boundaries and multiple identities […] undermine ideas of cultural belonging as a necessary accompaniment to political membership" (Mezzadra, Neilson 67). Thus, they are also estranged from the *full* benefits of citizenship due to the racism and xenophobia of the Anglo-American society in which they live, and they still do not 'belong.' This is especially true for Chicano gay men and Chicana lesbians who may also be estranged from the social and financial support of their immigrant family due to heterosexism. For this reason, border-dwellers are often unable or unwilling to identify themselves with a specific "national" culture or language. This can be seen in the experience of Chicana lesbian activist, academic, and writer Cherríe Moraga, who writes that "Coming to terms with […] [her] woman-centered desire [meant being] against anything that stood in its way, including [her] Church, [her] family, and [her] 'country'" (Moraga 146). The quotations Moraga puts around the word country would suggest that she does not believe the U.S. to actually be hers, that she does not truly 'belong.' Furthermore, this demonstrates how her womanhood, and especially her lesbianism, meant she would experience a certain level of estrangement from the support of not only her family but her community as well.

Anzaldúa describes borders as having a dual nature in which they serve to both connect and divide. In accordance with Anzaldúa, Mezzadra and Neilson summarize the perspective of French scholar Étienne Balibar that "Borders […] could be said to work as topological functions, which at once connect and divide, cross and cut political space, include and exclude" (Mezzadra,

Neilson 63). Not only do they mark national territories which are maintained through the use and threat of force, they also produce mixtures (the aforementioned 'border cultures') and juxtapositions (simultaneously being sites of constraint and possibility), often being where political, economic, and ethnic difference is most sharply asserted. Differences in wealth, power, mobility, and who 'belongs' create incentives to cross (i.e. economic necessity or leisure), but as shown in the example above comparing American and European tourists to Mexican immigrants, the level of permeability depends on which side of the border you start on, and not only that, but which side of the border one starts on (migrants without legal status) and the identities one carries (U.S.-born Chicanos) may still impede access to the potential benefits of a given side.

II. Language, Space, and Consciousness

Similar to the dual nature of borders themselves, Anzaldúa focuses a great deal on the inherent hybridity of the Chicana identity (and other borderland identities). One can see this in how the construction of *Borderlands* attempts to embody rather than simply describe mixture and hybridity. This posits a not-yet existing 'ideal' reader through the juxtaposition of languages (obliging readers to abandon their monolingual comfort-zone), different discursive registers (cultural history, autobiography, theoretical reflection), and the intermittent use of both poetry and prose. Another aspect of identity that Anzaldúa uses to demonstrate this hybridity is language. In the chapter titled, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Anzaldúa states that there is not merely one language that Chicanos speak. Her 'wild tongue' is able to switch between Standard English, working class and slang English, Standard Spanish, Standard Mexican Spanish, North Mexican Spanish dialect, Chicano Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California have regional variations), Tex-Mex, and *Pachuco* (called *caló*) (Anzaldúa 77). Chicano Spanish in particular has a rather unique status. The retention of archaisms and pronunciations from early

modern peninsular Spanish, incorporation of English loanwords, and code-switching are seen as 'impurities' and disparaged by both speakers of English and Standard Mexican Spanish. Additionally, when Chicanos (and Latinos) who have different levels of bilingualism and use varying amounts of code-switching end up speaking Spanglish, it is viewed as a failure or educational disadvantage (La Fountain-Stokes 143).

Explaining that code-switching is often the most natural form of communication for her and other Chicanos, Anzaldúa describes Chicano Spanish as expressive of the hybrid and impure character of border cultures (and the challenges they pose to the concept of a nation-state). She advocates for finding value in a language that has been historically disparaged as 'impure' precisely because of its hybridity, linking the demand for the acceptance of Chicano Spanish to a demand for the acceptance of multiplicity and heterogeneity. In *La política queer del espanglish* (The queer politics of Spanglish), Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes expounds upon what Anzaldúa wrote about Chicano Spanish, focusing on its connection to queerness in accordance with Anzaldúa's views of border cultures as 'queer' spaces where "The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants […] the perverse, the queer, the troublesome" (Anzaldúa 25). To Anzaldúa, not only are borderlands 'queer' (i.e. transgressive) spaces, but "Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens" (Anzaldúa 25). La Fountain-Stokes goes further, contending that a commonality exists between Spanglish and queerness in their transgressive nature. Both are connected to dichotomous notions of purity and impurity in which the civilized and accepted are juxtaposed to what is considered taboo, savage, barbaric, inferior, or degraded (La Fountain-Stokes 143).

La Fountain-Stokes refers to the work of several other academics that describe Spanglish as transgression: Mexican literary critic, university professor, and writer Ilan Stavans describes

the use of Spanglish as a linguistic game or condition of his "subaltern" students; Nuyorican poet and journalist Ed Morales sees it as a family social practice of resistance that (as Anzaldúa argues in *Borderlands*) is intimately connected to Latin American *mestizaje* (miscegenation, particularly between Europeans and indigenous populations; henceforth *mestizo* will refer to a man of mixed race and *mestiza* will refer to a woman of mixed race); and anthropolitical linguists Ana Celia Zentella (Mexican/Puerto Rican, born and raised in the United States) and Bonnie Urciuoli (American) articulate the linguistic elements of the racism experienced by Latinos in the United States and defend their bilingual practices (La Fountain-Stokes 142-3). Although these academics all comment on the profound queer (i.e. transgressive) nature of Spanglish, Anzaldúa is the only one to analyze the intersection of language and queer sexuality.

There is nothing intrinsically pure or impure about sexuality or language beyond how each is defined socio-culturally in a given historical moment. For Chicanos, the context for these notions of purity and impurity are rooted in conquest. The origin story of *mestizaje* in the Chicano consciousness is inextricably connected to Malintzin, also referred to as *La Malinche* (a nickname that implies betrayal) or *La Chingada* (the 'fucked' one). Malintzin was an indigenous interpreter/translator that helped the Spaniards conquer the Aztecs and a mistress to conquistador Hernán Cortés with whom she had a son (Martín). Aiding and consorting with Cortés made her into a traitor and symbol of violent sexualization, an exploited victim, and the object of guilt and abjection, whereas bearing his child made her the mother of the first mestizo and the symbolic mother of the Mexican people (La Fountain-Stokes 143-4). Her story and what she has come to symbolize demonstrate how gender and sexuality are connected to multilingualism in the Chicano consciousness. Malintzin's narrative connects woman to language, politicizes the feminine body (a site of both pleasure and reproduction), and makes her the violated

(conquered), impure mother of the nation and its language (La Fountain-Stokes 144). Furthermore, her place in the Chicano consciousness has made reclaiming Chicano Spanish and valorizing it for its hybridity—Chicanas establishing their own *lengua y sitio* (language and space)—an important aspect of Chicana activism for this reason—"if you want to really hurt [Chicanas], talk badly about [their] language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—[they are their] language" (Anzaldúa 81).

La Virgen de Guadalupe (The Virgin of Guadalupe), "the virgin mother who has not abandoned [Chicanos]" constitutes the other half of a dichotomy that exists between her and Malintzin, "*la Chingada (Malinche)*, the raped mother whom [Chicanos] have abandoned" (Anzaldúa 52). Anzaldúa describes how this is harmful to Chicanas when she writes that "the true identity of [these two figures] has been subverted—*Guadalupe* to make [Chicanas] docile and enduring, *la Chingada* to make us ashamed of our Indian side […] [encouraging] the *virgen/puta* (whore) dichotomy" (Anzaldúa 53). Throughout the 20th century, prominent (predominantly male) academics largely focused on this harmful dichotomy and emphasized the image of Malintzin as a symbol of violent sexualization. Later, Chicana and Mexican feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa began to reconstruct her image viewing her instead as a symbol of resistance and negotiation. A negotiator of multiple cultures as they are, Malintzin has become a symbol of their own oppression and a representation of their indigenous roots and the historical legacy of Spanish colonization, as well as their more recent subjugation and struggle against Anglo-Americans (La Fountain-Stokes 144). Guadalupe viewed in this light highlights the power of indigeneity for Chicanos and provides a model for cultural mediation, the importance of which in reference to Chicano gay men will be discussed further in Analysis and Findings.

Chicana historian Emma Pérez writes about the long-term psychological consequences of conquest and colonization (with Malintzin as its symbolic center) in her essay *Speaking from the Margin: Uninvited Discourse on Sexuality and Power*. Pérez theorizes Hernán Cortés, Malintzin, and la Virgen de Guadalupe as an "Oedipal-conquest triangle" that starts an "addictive cycle of dependence between the powerful and the powerless" (Pérez 64). She demonstrates dependence between the powerful and the powerless through several examples: the colonized population's necessity of learning the colonizer's language to access power and privilege (albeit controlled and qualified); Chicano men who embody the white colonizer's ways and impose them on their Chicana sisters, repudiating them for fear of being a weak, 'castrated' betrayer of their people; and the differing possibilities of getting closer to the nexus of power (the hegemonic status of the white male colonizer) for Chicanos and Chicanas who marry white people—their light-skinned children (perhaps) with white last names holding levels of power and privilege not attainable to their non-white parents (Pérez 60, 62-3). With this Oedipal-conquest triangle in their collective memories, "Both women and men are addicted to that which destroys them—the patriarchy within capitalist constructs in the late twentieth century. The social-sexual-racial relations between men and women condoned by the patriarchy are inherently unhealthy and destructive," especially for queer Chicanos. According to Pérez, achieving successful revolution in the face of the strength and persistence of the patriarchy lies in rejecting this addictive cycle. Anzaldúa emphasizes how this cycle perpetuates male dominance and often results in Chicano men (one will see that this is not exclusive to straight men and applies to gay men as well)—who are unable to attain the hegemonic dominance of white men—asserting this dominance in the form of violence against women.

Gloria Anzaldúa provides a model of the violent, addictive cycle described by Pérez, which she describes as "a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence" (Anzaldúa 100). In the final chapter of *Borderlands*, "*La conciencia de la mestiza*: Towards a New Consciousness," Anzaldúa redefines machismo for the Anglo reader. She prefaces this definition explaining that machismo as it is currently understood is actually an Anglo invention. For her father, being "macho" meant something else, "being strong enough to protect and support [her] mother and [she and her siblings], yet being able to show love" (Anzaldúa 105). What is different now, she writes, is that the "macho" Chicano man is threatened by hierarchized male dominance—their inability to access the hegemonic male dominance of the white man—that makes him feel shame, guilt, a lost sense of dignity, the discomfort of language inadequacy, racial amnesia, and self-deprecation and "leads him to put down women and even to brutalize them" (Anzaldúa 105).

In the same chapter, Anzaldúa also provides a model for deconstructing this violent, addictive cycle through the formation of "a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer* [a woman consciousness] […] a consciousness of the Borderlands" (Anzaldúa 99). She believes that those who are marginalized, "who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world," have what she refers to as *la facultad* (the faculty) (Anzaldúa 60). She defines it as "the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface […] an instant 'sensing,' a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning" (Anzaldúa 60). This means that someone who carries a marginalized identity, and especially those who carry multiple, are better able to understand the world around them, to see "beyond," and to see hierarchies and power relations that exist and the reality of their effects. This does not only apply to Chicanas either, rather "Those who are pounced on the most have it

the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the dark-skinned, the outcast, the persecuted, […] the foreign" (Anzaldúa 60). She suggests that *la facultad* in conjunction with the experience of constantly transitioning between languages and cultures that border-dwellers are accustomed to could be the basis of more expansive solidarities that could be useful with regard to various social justice movements (including queer liberation).

Just as she advocates for the acceptance of heterogeneity, multiplicity, and hybridity with regard to language, Anzaldúa also advocates for tolerance of ambiguity and contradictions with regard to cultural identity. Chicanas are already forced to "[learn] to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view […] to juggle cultures," but according to her, must also learn to harness *la facultad* to think divergently and "move toward […] a more whole perspective […] that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldúa 101). A perspective based on inclusion starts internally with Chicanas learning to view themselves as "greater than the sum of [their] severed parts [i.e. cultures or identities]" (Anzaldúa 102). In her eyes, Chicanas altering their perception of themselves, their reality, and their behavior is the first step in the formation of a new *mestiza* consciousness that breaks down individually and collectively held dualistic paradigms (white/non-white, male/female, virgin/whore, subject/object). Uprooting these dualistic paradigms is "the beginning of a long struggle" that "in our best hopes, [brings] us to the end of rape, of violence, of war" (Anzaldúa 102).

If altering their perception of themselves is the first step, the second is to take inventory of the various forms of oppression they experience, differentiating what was inherited, acquired, and imposed (Anzaldúa 104). She does this herself by constructing her identity as a Chicana lesbian and feminist in universalist terms. She has no country having been cast out of her homeland, no race having been disclaimed by her people for her lesbianism, and is cultureless as

a feminist that challenges many collective beliefs. At once all countries are hers as every woman's sister or potential lover, she belongs to all races because queerness transcends race, and she is cultured in the sense that she is a producer of new culture (Anzaldúa 102). Note the paradoxical nature of these ideas, yet another example where she embodies the duality of her identity in her writing. Taking inventory in this way "is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions" that allows for the adoption of "new perspectives toward the dark-skinned, women and queers […] strengthens her tolerance (and intolerance) for ambiguity […] [and makes her] vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking" (Anzaldúa 104).

The burden of this struggle is not solely on Chicana shoulders and shouldn't be. The goal behind the construction of this new *mestiza* consciousness is for it to serve as the basis of more expansive solidarities that will not only include but empower other marginalized groups for the betterment of all. She believes there is a shared inner struggle among marginalized populations whether "Chicano, *indio,* American Indian, *mojado*, *mexicano*, immigrant Latino, […] working class Anglo, Black, [or] Asian" and that in order for Chicanos to come together with these other groups "each of [them] must know [their] Indian lineage, [their] afro-*mestizaje*, [their] history of resistance" (Anzaldúa 108-9). Furthermore, although she validates the opinion of other people of color that it is the duty of white people to rid themselves of their own internalized fear and hatred, she admits to allowing herself to expend some of her energy to serve as a mediator. She feels that Chicanos should allow white people to be their allies and to collectively speak to white society, demanding among other things "the admission/acknowledgement/disclosure/testimony that they wound [Chicanos], violate [them], are afraid of [them] and of [their] power" (Anzaldúa 106).

It is not solely due to her own identity that she places such importance on the *mestiza*, rather the oppression of all is tied to her own for "As long as woman is put down, the Indian and the Black in all of us is put down," as well as the queer in those men who deviate from the norm (Anzaldúa 106). Later, referring to men's strict bondage to gender roles, she writes:

> "Only gay men have had the courage to expose themselves […] and to challenge the current masculinity. I've encountered a few scattered and isolated gentle straight men, the beginnings of a new breed, but they are confused, and entangled with sexist behaviors they have not been able to eradicate. We need a new masculinity and the new man needs a movement" (Anzaldúa 106).

This research, as one will soon see, will demonstrate that there has been little participation and scarce contributions from Chicano gay men in both the Chicano Movement and in Chicano-Latino Studies as a discipline. It is not only straight Chicano men that are "entangled with sexist behaviors," gay Chicano men, both femme and not, are also caught up in the same violent, addictive cycle. However, until now, gay Chicano men whose gender presentation is in accordance with traditional notions of masculinity and those who play the active role in a homosexual encounter (i.e. the penetrative partner) have been able to hold onto many of the same privileges as their straight counterparts. This differential treatment of queer men is based largely on whether their gender presentation is viewed as masculine. Maintaining these privileges has led traditionally masculine gay Chicano men to contribute not only to the oppression of their Chicana sisters but also that of their femme gay brothers encumbered as they are by the visibility of their queerness.

Since the publication of *Borderlands*, there have already been changes that could constitute progression towards the development of the "new consciousness" Anzaldúa describes.

One such example is in the ongoing reconstruction of the word Chicano itself. I have personally witnessed various changes that have occurred during my undergraduate career. Some of which have been preferential usage of the feminine Chicana, creative orthographies such as Chicana/o or Chican@ to include both the feminine and masculine adjective endings, and more recently the use of Chicanx has become more prevalent in an effort to acknowledge and be inclusive of gender non-conforming individuals. Though perhaps less common, some use Xicano in an effort to acknowledge the important role of indigeneity in Chicano history because the letter 'x' was historically a 'ch' sound in indigenous languages. If there continues to be a progression towards the centering of the queer, indigenous Chicana in the Chicano Movement and Chicano-Latino Studies as a discipline, one could conceivably imagine the construction of yet another word, such as "Xicanx," that would serve to acknowledge both indigeneity in 'X' and gender non-conforming individuals in 'x.' These developments are merely examples that I have personally witnessed, but they are not the only examples and one will see in the next section that Anzaldúa is not the only queer Chicana feminist to suggest that there must be a construction of a new consciousness.

III. Queer Aztlán

In *Borderlands,* Anzaldúa provides a brief history of Aztlán—the name of the Chicano homeland. She describes its indigenous influences beginning with the Cochise migrants who were the ancestors of the Aztecs and the land's earliest settlers arriving around 35,000 BCE, then the birth of a mestizo population when the 16th century sees the Spanish conquest. Later still, the traumas of a U.S.-Mexican War from 1846 to 1848 and the subsequent acquisition of present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California by the United States with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Anzaldúa 26, 29). In *Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of*

Chicano Tribe (henceforth referred to simply as *Queer Aztlán*), Cherríe Moraga, another Chicana lesbian academic, activist, and writer describes her complex set of identities and maps out the exclusionary history of various social movements to preface her desire for the construction of a *new* Aztlán—in other words, a new Chicano consciousness. Moraga demonstrates the homeland's almost spiritual importance in the Chicano consciousness in a description of her discovery of the word Aztlán in her essay:

> *Aztlán*. I don't remember when I first heard the word, but I remember it took my heart by surprise to learn of that place—that "sacred landscape" wholly evident en las playas, los llanos, y en las montañas of the North American Southwest. A terrain that I did not completely comprehend at first, but that I continue to try, in my own small way, to fully inhabit and make habitable for its Chicano citizens.
>
> *Aztlán* gave language to a nameless anhelo [desire] inside me. To me, it was never a masculine notion. It had nothing to do with the Aztecs and everything to do with Mexican birds, Mexican beaches, and Mexican babies right here in Califas. I remember once driving through Anza Borrego desert, just east of San Diego, […]
>
> That day I claimed that land […] as I wrapped around a rubber-burning curve, I saw it: **"A-Z-T-L-A-N,"** in granite-sized letters etched into the face of the mountainside. Of course, I hadn't been the first. Some other Chicano came this way, too, saw what I saw, felt what I felt. Enough to put a name to it. *Aztlán. Tierra Sagrada* [Sacred Ground].
>
> A term Náhuatl in root, Aztlán was that historical/mythical land where one set of Indian forebears, the Aztecs, were said to have resided 1,000 years ago. Located in the U.S. Southwest, Aztlán fueled a nationalist struggle twenty years ago, which encompassed much of the pueblo Chicano from Chicago to the borders of Chihuahua. In

> the late sixties and early seventies, Chicano nationalism meant the right to control our own resources, language, and cultural traditions, rights guaranteed us by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed in 1848 when the Southwest was "annexed" to the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War. (Moraga 151-2)

However, Cherríe Moraga goes beyond the history of Aztlán. In her essay, she reflects on her coming of age in the late 60s and learning to navigate her own unique intersection of identities as "a closeted, light-skinned, mixed-blood Mexican-American, disguised in [her] father's English last name," and her politicization through the "bold recognition of her lesbianism" (Moraga 146-7).

Coming out propelled Moraga into the various social movements of her era, but she experienced many forms of exclusion throughout her twenty years of activism, "the racism of the Women's Movement, the elitism of the Gay and Lesbian Movement, the homophobia and sexism of the Chicano Movement, and the benign cultural imperialism of the Latin American Solidarity Movement" (Moraga 146). Later, she writes about a conversation she had with poet Ricardo Bracho about the limitations of the 90s LGBT activist organization Queer Nation—a rather white, Anglo nation for many queer people of color. Bracho jokingly says that what they need is a Queer Aztlán—"A Chicano homeland that could embrace *all* its people, including its jotería [queer folk]" (Moraga 147). Understanding its importance in the Chicano consciousness allows one to understand why she and Bracho frame their desire for a reinvigorated and revolutionized Chicano Movement on the "more *meta*physical than physical territory" that is Aztlán (Moraga 153). Moraga, like other Chicanos, cannot necessarily envision a world in which the physical territory of Aztlán is returned to them, but she does envision a world in which

Chicanos have reclaimed the *meta*physical territory of Aztlán in their colonized minds, bodies, and souls.

Earlier in the Chicano Movement, "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán) was written, but "lesbians and gay men were not envisioned as members of the 'house'" and were excluded from the plan "[forfeiting] the participation and vision of some very significant female and gay leaders and never [achieving] the kind of harmonious Chicano 'familia' they ostensibly sought" (Moraga 158-9). In this section, Moraga discusses the shared experiences of queer men and women, writing "we do share the fact that our 'homosexuality'—our feelings about sex, sexual power and domination, femininity and masculinity, family, loyalty, and morality—has been shaped by heterosexist culture and society" (Moraga 160). Like Anzaldúa, she believes in the importance of queer folks to the Chicano Movement—"[queers] have plenty to tell heterosexuals about themselves. […] I suspect heterosexual Chicanos will have the world to learn from their gay brothers about their shared masculinity, but they have the most to learn from the 'queens,' the 'maricones' [faggots]" (Moraga 160). In a future where Chicano gay men assume this responsibility, Moraga writes that they must: 1) "give up their subscription to male superiority," 2) realize "that their freedom is intricately connected to the freedom of women," and 3) "openly [confront] Chicano sexuality and sexism" in order to "unravel how both men *and* women have been formed and deformed by racist Amerika and [their] misogynist/catholic/colonized mechicanidad," (Moraga 163).

Moraga also discusses the differential participation and contribution of Chicano gay men and Chicana lesbians thus far. The latter have been at the forefront of "some of the most impassioned activism" while "the majority of gay men still cling to what privileges they can" (Moraga 159, 161). Despite "[having] often been severely disappointed and hurt by the

misogyny of gay Chicanos," Moraga is still able to see the potential that exists for coalition-building and believes that gay male participation is of particular importance to the movement because of their understanding of "the macho's desire to dominate the feminine, but even more intimately because they both desire men and share manhood with their oppressor" (Moraga 161). Domination by the heterosexual or masculine Chicano man is another commonality between queer men and women that Moraga points out. Queer men, especially femme gay men, often share in the experiences of rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence at the hands of their (macho) brethren that Chicana women are too accustomed to. The corporal nature of the domination experienced leads Moraga to an analysis of land and indigeneity in the metaphysical plane of Aztlán. In the vein of Pérez's conception of Malintzin as the symbolic territorialization of the Chicana woman, Moraga writes "Land remains the common ground for all radical action. But land is more than the rocks and trees, the animal and plant life that make up the territory of Aztlán […] For women, lesbians, and gay men, land is that physical mass called our bodies" (Moraga 173).

Citing the importance of sovereignty and land rights to international indigenous movements and Chicanos' connection to indigeneity broadly (most are unable to identify which specific tribes their ancestors belonged to), Moraga advocates centering the indigenous aspect of their identity and looking to indigenous models going into the future for three reasons. First, their indigenous ancestors inhabited the Chicano homeland long before the Spanish conquest and the subsequent Anglo colonization—"our Indian blood and history of resistance […] made us rightful inheritors of Aztlán. […] a Chicana […] becomes a citizen of this country, not by virtue of a green card, but by virtue of the collective voice she assumes in staking her claim to this land and its resources" (Moraga 154, 156). Second, although she acknowledges that not all Native

American tribes held the same beliefs, Moraga refers to gay men and lesbians traditionally having been respected for being "two-spirited" (i.e. at once demonstrating both masculine and feminine traits) as "historical validation for what Chicana lesbians and gay men have always recognized—[they] play a significant spiritual, cultural, and political role within the Chicano community" (Moraga 165). Lastly, in the face of a capitalist, heterosexist, and racist society that largely fails to sustain Chicanos physically, emotionally, or spiritually "[Chicanos] have formed circles of support and survival, often drawing from the more egalitarian models of indigenous communities […] the tribal model is a form of community-building that can accommodate socialism, feminism, and environmental protection" (Moraga 164-5). In conclusion, Moraga believes that the future of the Chicano Movement is returning to the indigenous and female roots of their homeland and placing the decolonization of the queer, brown, and female body at its center. However, in order for this to take place her queer brethren must stand beside her.

Analysis and Findings

I. Homosexual Identity and Behavior Among Chicano Men

"Unlike the 'queens' who have always been open about their sexuality, 'passing' gay men have learned in a visceral way that being in 'the closet' and preserving their 'manly' image will not protect them, it will only make their dying more secret." – Cherríe Moraga

In *Hombres chicanos: una cartografía de la identidad y del comportamiento homosexual* (Chicano men: Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior), Tomás Almaguer, a Chicano sociologist out of the University of California – Berkeley and Professor and Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University, seeks to explore the differences in the sexual cultures of the United States and Mexico. He analyzes how the influence of both of these cultures (i.e. biculturalism) affect the ways in which Chicano men address homosexual identity and behavior. Almaguer refers to two sexual systems, making a distinction between a European-

North American system and a Mexican-Latin American one, each with their own sexual codes (Almaguer 46). In the former, sexuality is structured based on the desired sexual object—meaning the preferred sex or gender of sexual partners—resulting in the formation of categories that define a person's sexual preference (i.e. bi/hetero/homosexual). A consequence of this system is the condemnation of homosexual behavior—viewed historically in Europe and North America as sinful, destructive to the body, or as a mental illness—and that desire alone is stigmatized and marginalizes queer men from masculine power (Almaguer 49).

In the latter, sexuality is structured based on the sexual purpose of one's sexual practices—with sex and gender as a secondary factor—resulting in the formation of categories that define the role a person plays in a sexual encounter (i.e. *activos y pasivos* [tops and bottoms], the penetrative and receptive partners respectively). A consequence of this system is that not all queer men are affected the same. *Pasivos* experience significantly more stigmatization because their role is viewed as subordinate and feminine, whereas *activos* are essentially free of this stigmatization because the perception of their role as dominant and masculine affords them the privilege of being viewed as (normal) men (Almaguer 50). Cherríe Moraga, whose work Almaguer later references in his essay, recognizes this fact as well in *Queer Aztlán*—"Because they are deemed 'inferior' for not fulfilling the traditional role of men, [femme gay men] are more marginalized from mainstream heterosexual society than other gay men and are especially vulnerable to male violence" (Moraga 161).

In order to better explain these differences, Almaguer describes how 'anal passivity' is stigmatized and given subordinate status in Latin culture—"'Giving' is being masculine, 'receiving' is being feminine" (Almaguer 51). In Mexico, male-female relations have developed to fit the stereotype of the dominant, aggressive man (whose male sex organ is viewed as

'active') and the selfless, resigned, passive woman (whose female sex organ [along with the male anus] is viewed as 'passive') (Almaguer 51-2). He believes that it is because of the stigmatized nature of penetration and who is being penetrated that:

> "the masculine gender and heterosexual identity of a Mexican are not seen as threatened by a homosexual act, as long as the man plays the penetrative role. Only the man in the passive sexual role and with feminine gender characteristics is considered truly homosexual, and as a result is stigmatized […] it is primordially the effeminate, passive homosexual that is the object of ridicule and social scorn in Mexico" (Almaguer 54)

These concepts are reified in everyday language as well. Pejorative terms for gay men such as '*maricón*' or '*joto*' are nearly exclusively used for effeminate, passive gay men. The word '*puto*' is noteworthy in that the feminine equivalent '*puta*' refers to a female prostitute while the masculine refers to a passive, gay man. Almaguer likens these terms to the usage of the word "cocksucker" in the U.S. (where oral sex is stigmatized more than in Mexico) (Almaguer 55).

Due to the emphasis on behavior and sexual practices, "bourgeois" identity-based sexual categories such as "gay" and "lesbian" that have only recently been imported from the United States have not historically been pertinent to the conferring of gender or sexual meaning in Mexican society (Almaguer 58). However, Mexican men that do define their sexual identity as "gay" have largely adopted North American models—"the most recent incarnation of the 'modern Mexican homosexual' is based on North American sexual codes and the 'foreign' nature of such sexual practices has made the men who have adopted them known as *international*" (Almaguer 58). Many of the conclusions Almaguer comes to are in line with work already done by Chicana lesbians, to whom he pays respectful homage, refers to often, and from whom he believes Chicano gay men have much to learn (Almaguer 64, 71). First, he develops a

preliminary typology to describe the ways in which Chicano gay men navigate the duality of the Chicano experience described by Anzaldúa. He discerns five principal ways in which Chicano gay men have come to integrate elements of both sexual systems in their sexual conduct:

> "1) working-class Latinos that embody an effeminate persona and that generally play the passive role in homosexual encounters […] 2) Latinos that consider themselves hetero or bisexual, but that furtively have sex with other men. […] They tend to conserve a strong Chicano ethnic identity and structure their sexuality in accordance with the Mexican sexual system […] 3) Latino men that openly consider themselves gay and participate in the nascent gay subculture […] 4) Latino men that consider themselves gay without participating in the Latino gay subculture, and that prefer to maintain a basic identity as Latinos and only secondarily as gay; and […] 5) Latino men that totally integrate into the white masculine gay community" (Almaguer 63)

Second, as noted by both Anzaldúa and Moraga, Almaguer stresses the competing interests and differential levels of privilege based on the masculinity or femininity of gay men. The emergence of these (predominantly masculine) *international* gay men that identify themselves as "gay" and "come out of the closet" could be beneficial in that their gender conformity could legitimate to a certain degree a "gay lifestyle," but at the same time they further stigmatize femme gay men—whose visibility never allowed them to attempt to 'play straight' and thus experienced less turmoil and fewer problems accepting their identity and coming out—who are also seeking acceptance (Almaguer 59).

In the last section of the essay, "The last frontier: Unmasking the Chicano gay man," Almaguer contends that one has "yet to explore in depth the ways in which Chicano gay men experience the complex process of integrating, reconciling and questioning diverse aspects of the

Anglo-Saxon cultural life as much as of the Chicano one" (Almaguer 71). However, in this early exploration of homosexual identity and behavior among Chicano men (supplemented heavily by the work of Chicana lesbians), Almaguer has gleaned that Chicano gay men still harbor the same implicit disdain towards women and femininity in general that straight men do—"Despite having accepted a 'modern' sexual identity, they are not immune to the generic and hierarchical system of sexual meanings" (Almaguer 72). In conclusion, Almaguer challenges Chicano gay men to abandon 'the closet' they've been relegated to and take on the task of reinterpreting and redefining what it is means to be at once gay and Chicano in cultural mediums that have historically considered these categories contradictory (Almaguer 72).

II. Feminization of the (Young) Male Body

*"As a Chicana lesbian, I know that the struggle I share with all Chicano and Indigenous peoples is truly one of sovereignty, the sovereign right to wholly inhabit oneself (*cuerpo y alma*) and one's territory (*pan y tierra*)" – Cherríe Moraga*

In *Biografías sexuales en varones con prácticas homoeróticas, el caso de la ciudad de México* (Sexual biographies in men with homoerotic practices, the case of Mexico City), Gabriel Gallego Montes conducts a study of 250 men with the goal of better understanding the socio-sexual events and transitions that take place over the course of their lives. Montes focuses on three socio-sexual events: 1) the homoerotic sexual debut, 2) the first relationship or partnership between men, and 3) the first co-resident relationship or union. For the purposes of this section, the first of these socio-sexual events will be most pertinent. Montes largely (implicitly) agrees with Tomás Almaguer's depiction of Mexican-Latin American sexual culture, writing that there is a (heteronormative) sexual hierarchy in which penetration is the central act—and is associated with the "activity" of men and "passivity" of women—and vaginal sex is at the top while homoerotic practices between men such as anal penetration and oral sex have an inferior status

(Montes 59-60). The portion of the study that focuses on the men's homoerotic sexual debut revealed intra-gender power relations that appear to be connected to "legitimate" ways of being a man and exercising one's masculinity. The median age of respondents at the time of the first experience was 15.5, an age—corroborated by Almaguer—that would explain the domestic nature of the occurrence, which usually took place in the home and with someone in their social networks (Almaguer 57, Montes 61-2). Furthermore, Montes discerned three categories of experience among these men: 1) when the partner was 2 or more years older, the interviewee was the receptive partner and performed oral sex on the older man [2/3 of respondents], 2) when the interviewee was the older man it tended to be the contrary [just 7.2% of respondents], and 3) when the interviewee and their first sexual partner were less than two years apart in age it was a "democratic" experience in which there were reciprocal penetrations, oral sex, mutual masturbation, caresses, and orgasms [28% of respondents] (Montes 64).

Cognizance of these manifestations of homoeroticism sheds light on some of their more problematic aspects. First, knowing that approximately two-thirds of respondents had their first experience before they were of age and with someone at least two years their senior contributes to the classic vision of an older, more experienced man "initiating" a younger one. Second, there is a well-established power relation based on age difference that translates into the feminization of the younger man's body (Montes 64). This feminization comes in three forms: 1) Mexico being a partial inheritor of the Mediterranean cultural context of their Spanish colonizers—a limited explanation provided by Montes—it appears the young male body is the object of desire, and in a homoerotic context viewed as penetrable, 2) there is a more or less defined "true" masculinity based on the negation of the feminine and the homosexual (understood through a sexual hierarchy), and 3) the capacity for negotiation and mutual satisfaction is significantly

diminished for a man that is under age or is his partner's junior (Montes 65). According to Montes, this demonstrates clear heteronormative constructions of eroticism between men, conceptions of the body, and internalization of sexual norms in which various parallel dichotomies (feminine/masculine = younger/older = penetrated/penetrator) define the fields of possibility, sexual negotiation, and resistance (Montes 66-7). This constitutes a feminization (i.e. territorialization) of the (young, femme, queer) male body—just as "Chicanos are an occupied nation within a nation, and women and women's sexuality are occupied within Chicano nation […] women's bodies and those of men and women who transgress their gender roles have been historically regarded as territories to be conquered" (Moraga 150).

In accordance with Tomás Almaguer, Montes explains that sexual identity goes beyond the object of desire, masculinity dominating the seemingly prescribed, heteronormative sexual roles mapped out in Mexican-Latin American culture (Montes 68). However, Montes goes even further, contending that to start singularly from the sexual object would constitute an acritical and reductionist foreign vision of the complex field of sexualities in Mexico (Montes 78). In Mexico, the category "heterosexual" only exists in academia and select social sectors highly influenced by foreign (Western) discourses to refer to certain sexual practices, whereas in the general population the category "man" constitutes the marker of masculinity based on behavior, which neither denies nor rejects eroticism with men—thus, for most of these men, their homoerotic experiences remain without a name much less an attachment to a sexual identity (Montes 79). There is power in gay men naming their experiences, talking about them, writing about them, 'unmasking' themselves as Almaguer argued. The *international* gay men discussed by Almaguer are a prime example of the power of a name—in this case using the label "gay"—having seemingly helped foster a greater level of acceptance through their visibility (albeit

further stigmatizing feminine gay men in the process). This visibility as a starting point could pave the way for the open confrontation of male superiority Anzaldúa, Moraga, and Pérez have called for among Chicano men. However, as one shall see, for Chicanos and Latinos in the United States these experiences can be even more nuanced and complicated.

III. Gender Performance: Deconstructing Masculinity

"To speak of my desire, to find voice in my brown flesh, I needed to confront my male mirror." – Ricardo Bracho

In *Making masculinity: Negotiations of gender presentation among Latino gay men*, Anthony C. Ocampo, facing a lack of studies about gay men of color, seeks to analyze how U.S.-born Latino gay men 'do' masculinity through a 7-month ethnographic study of 15 gay men in Los Angeles. Ocampo hypothesizes that masculinity serves as a form of cultural capital—based on Bourdieu's theory that dominant groups utilize culture to prevent subordinate groups from accessing power and resources—and that their conceptions of masculinity are both racialized and gendered (Ocampo 449). The results of the study are prefaced by explaining that "gender is performed and accomplished, and it serves to naturalize and essentialize differences (that are neither natural nor essential) between men and women," and that men and women are socialized to act in "masculine" and "feminine" ways (Ocampo 451). Where Ocampo's interest lies is in exactly *how* these Latino gay men have been socialized to perform their various masculinities which "are simultaneously shaped by their social position as racial and sexual minorities," here acknowledging the intersection of identities that marginalizes them from hegemonic masculinity. Note that like queer Chicanas, with the exception of not being women, these men must navigate being racial minorities in the U.S. context and sexual minorities within their immigrant family (the source of *la facultad*).

Prior to discussing the results of his ethnographic study, Ocampo also takes care to dispel the stereotype of Latin American cultures being especially macho and homophobic. He critiques this idea first by arguing that it implies the existence of a culturally-defined, monolithic "Latino masculinity," when in fact various factors such as race, class, nativity, generational status, legal status, or region have fostered various "masculinities" and do a much better job of explaining the oppression, isolation, and high-risk behaviors associated with Latino gay men. For example,

> "in both U.S. and Latin America, Latino gay men who are breadwinners or are financially independent feel the freedom to disclose their sexuality and bring partners to family functions. In contrast, Latino gay men who lack economic resources may feel the need to keep their sexuality hidden or 'tacit' (understood, but not discussed) because they do not want to compromise the social and financial support that they receive from family members" (Ocampo 453)

Thus, in accordance with both Tomás Almaguer and Gabriel Gallego Montes, Ocampo believes such (Western) stereotypes of Latin American cultures to be reductionist and acritical. Finally, this leads to the results of his purposive ethnographic study. He followed the lives of 15 U.S.-born Latino gay men (9 Mexican [i.e. Chicano], 3 Salvadoran, 2 Puerto Rican, and 1 Cuban), who in spite of potential differences in the aforementioned factors, shared certain commonalities, including that they "perform masculinity through presentation of self, social distancing from femininity and the desiring of a masculine partner, however masculinity may be constructed" (Ocampo 454). Taking into account respondents' need to situate their intersecting identities in multiple gender value systems, Ocampo concludes that "Latino gay men constructed a nuanced form of masculinity within these fields that allowed them to mitigate the contradictions they encountered" (Ocampo 468).

The subsequent sections detail the four other key findings of the study. First, each of these men paid careful attention to their presentation of self in the way that they dressed and spoke, even which social scenes they frequented, all with the goal of maintaining a gender presentation comparable to the "urban" masculinity of other working-class men of color in their neighborhoods (Ocampo 456-7). Second, he discerned a social distancing characterized by a vision of Latino masculinity as non-white and non-"gay." All respondents agreed that West Hollywood was the center of gay life in Los Angeles while simultaneously describing the area as more "white," "feminine," and "bougie," demonstrating an implicit understanding of the racialized, gendered, and class-based aspects of public space and a belief that Latino and white gay men have distinct presentations of gender (Ocampo 457). Not only were they aware of these aspects of public space, but they also felt that West Hollywood was an "unwelcoming, even hostile environment for non-White gay men—a space demarcated as a site of social acceptance for the gay community" (Ocampo 458). This social distancing and awareness of the differential treatment they experience in public spaces had an interesting result. In contrast with the open assertion of their ethnic or racial identities in everyday conversations, many respondents were uncomfortable using "gay" as a self-descriptor, which they associate with (mainstream) femme, white gay men, preferring to use euphemisms such as "I date men" or "I sleep with guys" (Ocampo 458-9). Although respondents grew more comfortable using "gay" as a self-descriptor, they still disassociated themselves from white, femme gay cultural markers and preferred gay spaces frequented predominantly by other people of color (Ocampo 459).

Third, social distancing from whiteness and femininity had an effect on respondents' dating preferences. In conversation, respondents often sanctioned each other if someone was not following masculine gender norms, which is explained as socialization from their immigrant

families in which older men punished them "for acting feminine or spending too much (platonic) time with women" (Ocampo 460). Respondents even engaged in "fag discourse" at times, labelling each other as "gay" or other femme-associated epithets such as "that dude's a girl," "he's a total bottom," "Dude, he's a fag," or "that guy's such a queen" to sanction their peers, ensure they would be perceived as masculine, and indicate that they can properly identify masculinity in others—behaviors "consistent with those of heterosexual men" that "[reify] the patriarchal and heteronormative ideology that masculinity is superior to femininity" (Ocampo 460-1). These various forms of public sanctioning between fellow gay men extended to commentary on each other's choice of sexual and romantic partners. Most respondents sought out the same "urban" masculinity they employ to present themselves and sanctioned those who dated men who transgress from masculine norms (Ocampo 461). Choosing a masculine partner seemed to take on such importance because "having a masculine partner helped them salvage their masculinity among family members who might be put off by their sexual orientation" (Ocampo 465). Anzaldúa, Moraga, and Almaguer each describe the "central role that the Mexican family plays in the structuration of homosexual conduct" and that the family unit has historically been the primary means of resistance for Chicanos/Latinos, making the (mainstream) white gay ideal of "coming out" significantly more consequential and difficult for Chicanos/Latinos (Almaguer 55).

The final section has the most ramifications for the Chicano Movement. Although respondents largely held onto strict notions of masculinity, Ocampo noticed that some had at least partially deconstructed them towards the end of the 7-month study. One respondent in particular, Javier, began spending time with a group of Latino men that split their time between the "white," "feminine," and "bougie" mainstream gay spaces of West Hollywood and the

predominantly Latino scenes most respondents frequented. Javier began identifying as "gay" with as much fervor as with his ethnicity, and:

> "these men provided a space for Javier to acclimate to mainstream gay social settings and even experiment with feminine gender play he once considered taboo. He felt that he was able to do so because among these men his sense of masculinity would not be questioned or compromised" (Ocampo 466)

Ocampo identified the source of these changes in certain "gay men of color who were 'veteran' patrons of mainstream gay social scenes" who "served as 'cultural brokers' who helped [him] learn to culturally navigate both […] social worlds" (Ocampo 465). This demonstrates the power of *la facultad*, those men who spend more time transitioning between languages and cultures are also better at navigating them and—like Gloria Anzaldúa—are better able to serve as mediators. The results of Montes' study of *Biografías sexuales en varones con prácticas homoeróticas, el caso de la ciudad de México* (Sexual biographies in men with homoerotic practices, the case of Mexico City) suggest that being more experienced would indeed have the effect of making one more able to 'deconstruct' the world around them. The study showed that respondents grew steadily more polyamorous and less sexually exclusive with age and more sexual partners and partnerships, even using sexual openness as a strategy to maintain long-term relationships. This could be said to constitute a refutation of the heteronormative norms and discourses in Mexican society in the form of increased flexibility with regard to sexual morality (Montes 75-8).

Another interesting occurrence that developed among some of the respondents was the concept of "manning up" to being gay. In essence, once respondents grew more comfortable with their own sexual identity it became another form a masculinity-based cultural capital and those who remained ambivalent were publicly sanctioned just as those who transgressed gender norms

were. Ocampo identifies this phenomenon as an instance in which the competing cultural value systems respondents are forced to navigate actually align (Ocampo 467). Ocampo believes that together these phenomena (cultural mediation and "manning up") could constitute an "important template for bridging social divisions within the gay community, a space in which gay people of color continue to feel excluded based on their race and class background" (Ocampo 468). Although the concept of "manning up" to being gay could potentially be beneficial in the short term in the sense that Chicano gay men would have a framework for encouraging one another to acknowledge and accept their sexual identity, in the long term it remains problematic. As a potential solution for 'deconstructing' learned norms of masculinity, "manning up" poses the problem of reifying certain masculine norms and masculinity as a form of cultural capital at the same time as encouraging acknowledgment and acceptance of homosexual identity and behavior. On the other hand, the concept of a cultural 'broker' or 'mediator' is quite similar to Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of cultural mediation and presents a subject that would be beneficial to study further going forward. Who makes for an effective cultural 'broker' or 'mediator'? Are there other models of mediation besides the one provided in this ethnography?

Conclusion

Chicano gay men are faced with a unique situation that differs from those of Chicana women, gay or straight, in which their homosexual desire or homoerotic practices can be tolerated as long as they are peripheral and they still prescribe to the traditional masculine norms and roles that are expected of them. Thus, straight-passing Chicano gay men (those who prescribe to said norms) have historically had an easy choice in front of them. They could choose to remain 'men' in the socially and culturally constructed sense and be Chicano men before being queer, holding onto and hiding behind male privilege instead of using it to tackle the

heterosexism that oppresses Chicano gay men and women alike. For many, this begs the question of "how many lives are lost each time we cling to privileges that make other people more vulnerable to violence?" (Moraga 164-5). In this case, straight-passing Chicano gay men are making their femme gay brethren and Chicana sisters—who have historically been excluded from the movement and been forced to make a choice to fight for the liberation of just one of their marginalized identities, often at the expense of another—more vulnerable. In the face of this dilemma, a divide between Chicana lesbians and Chicano gay men arose, but a handful of Chicano activists, academics, and writers have provided valuable models for coalition-building between these two groups.

Until now, Chicana women have continued to be viewed negatively due to an attachment to the cultural figure of Malintzin (*la Malinche/la Chingada*), "making us believe the Indian woman in [them] is the betrayer" (Anzaldúa 44). Like Malintzin consorting with Hernán Cortés, they end up viewed as traitors when they utilize the North American sexual cultural system to gain autonomy. Gloria Anzaldúa is an example of this herself, her fierce affirmation of her lesbianism, feminism, and multilingualism questioning the traditional conception of women as quiet and submissive, as subjugated and subordinate victims, or as obedient wives and mothers (La Fountain-Stokes 145). This creates dissonance between Chicanas (especially lesbians) and the family unit, the primary means of resisting North American racism and capitalist exploitation. However, coalition-building with Chicano gay men (especially straight-passing ones) represents a unique opportunity to further dismantle the heterosexism within the cultures they must navigate. Chicano gay men can choose to use their privileged place in the Chicano social-cultural hierarchy to step outside of the historical pattern that places class over race over

sex over sexuality and place the struggles of the Chicana *mestiza* and the *joto* at the forefront, or at least on equal footing with those of class and race.

There are many opportunities for gay men to better ally themselves with women and Chicanas who have paved the way for them by utilizing the Borderlands and the intermingling of cultures to their advantage, creating languages and spaces of their own in the North American context in order to gain autonomy and circumvent racism and heterosexism. Chicano gay men could do the same. Queer Chicanos have seemingly only just begun to develop languages and spaces of their own. Like Chicana lesbians before them, they can un-tame their tamed tongues and let them be wild, form their own queer spaces, and write and talk about their experiences to form community and culture and to protect themselves from the threats of violence and discrimination. Furthermore, if Chicanos were to reconnect with their indigeneity, central to the construction of Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness and Moraga's Queer Aztlán, it would only be natural to appreciate queer folks more. Exploring societies built by (some of) their indigenous ancestors in which queer individuals were considered to be of high stature and women were on (more) equal footing with men, it would only be natural for Chicanos to identify more often as queer and to stand beside their Chicana sisters. Lastly, allying with Native American rights groups and fighting for land, self-determination, recognition, and the rediscovery of lost cultures, languages, and identities in the midst of a xenophobic United States could provide the Chicano Movement a means of moving away from the family unit as the primary means of resistance, instead opting to participate in and contribute to more expansive solidarities.

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